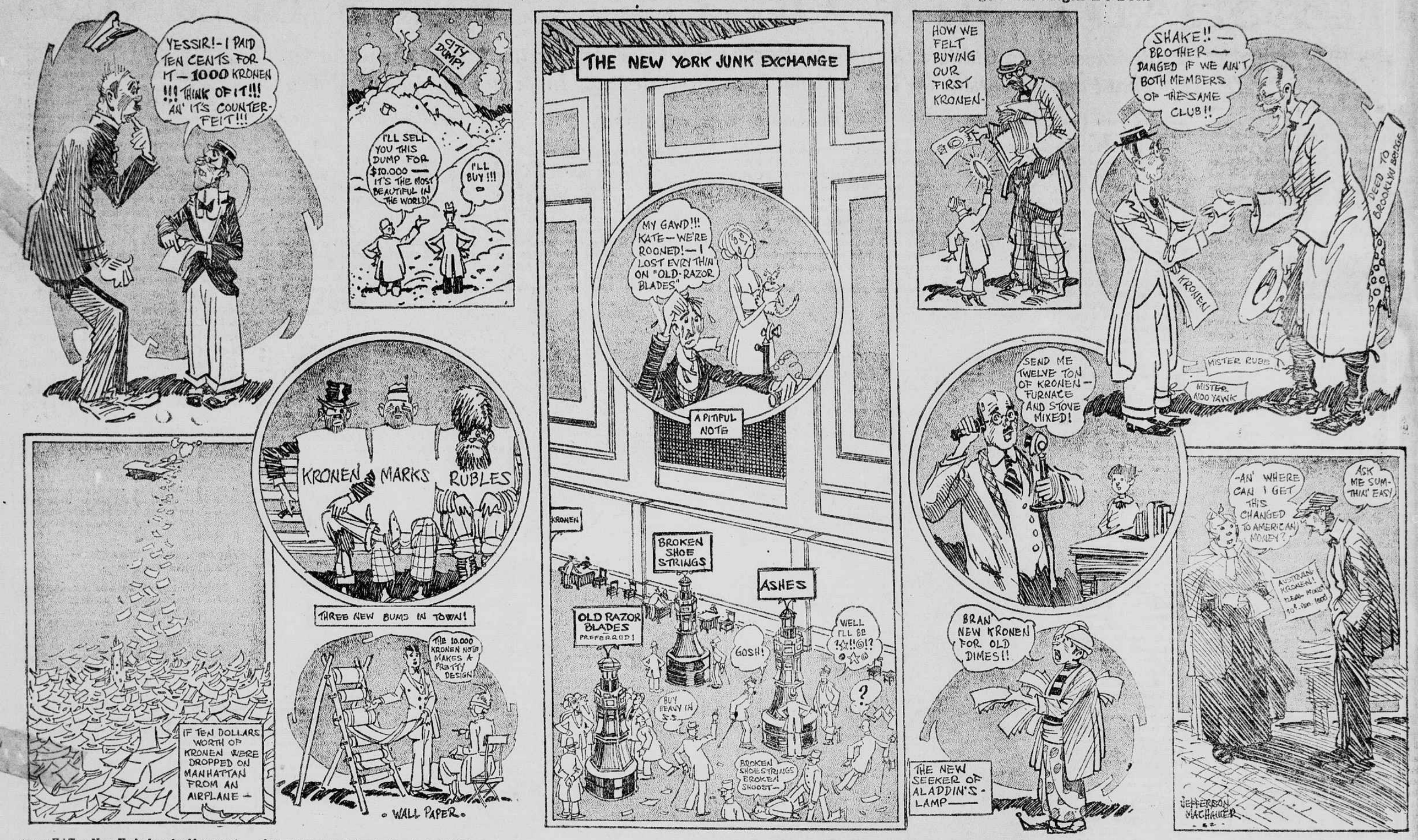
East Side, West Side, All Around The Town

... and Down the Kronen Market, With Suggestions by Jefferson Machamer of Other Things That Might Be Sold



By FAIRFAX DOWNEY

THAT a New York day should re-enact the fantastic and incredible happenings of an Arabian night seems too much to expect. Still, all around the town you can see Austrian kronen being bought for good old American dimes.

When Aladdin's mother, who had a perfectly natural failing for bargains, heard some one out in the street hawking new lamps for old she tumbled. How was she to know that the crazy representative of foreign lamp exchange was a magician in disguise? Aladdin had an old lamp kicking around the house which was a bad bet as an antique and a miserable failure as a light. All the lad did was to rub the thing. So Mrs. Aladdin traded in the precious lamp that furnished her son such splendid genii service.

Thus New Yorkers to-day are exchanging on the street corners a few cents for many kronen. An old woman who invested 10 cents for 1,000 crowns was heard to ask the vendor: "Now, where do I get the money for this?" The vendor's proper answer should have been "Ask me sumpthin' easy, lady."

For it is no easy matter in these prosaic days to follow the example for recovery of Aladdin and fly away on a magic Axminster rug to the place where one can get the money for kronen. For one thing, it is doubtful if there is any place where you can get much money for Austrian crowns, and for another they won't let you fly away with a magic Axminster rug until you have paid all the installments on it.

Easily lies the man who sells a crown. He talks most glibly as he displays his pretty paper wares, and what is most marvelous in this city of the supposedly sophisticated, he sells them. What the buyer plans to do with his purchase is a puzzle. Perhaps he considers that he is negotiating a foresighted financial transaction on the curb market, or he has an unfavorite heir whose claim in the will is to read: "I give and bequeath to ——— the sum of one thousand ——— kronen."

Out-of-towners may have "bought" the Brooklyn Bridge in bygone days, but New Yorkers buy kronen. That brings a glimpse of hitherto unsuspected commercial possibilities. Enterprising ash and trash men ought to be able to drop their carting and disposal departments entirely. Taking their stand on the sidewalk in front of the building from which they have collected, they have only to beat on the cans and shout in a raucous voice and along will come a typical kronen customer and pay for the privilege of taking it all off their hands.

But who can say for certain that kronen will not be worth something some day? At some future date a purchaser may take a trip to Austria and find that they have subways with featherweight gates for featherweight kronen.

THE SCHOOL OF AUCTION BRIDGE

By R. F. FOSTER

AUCTION bridge in England is still in the controversial stage. Every now and then some Sunday newspaper comes out with half a dozen hands and asks its readers what they would bid on them. Five different declarations on each of them is the smallest number to date, and they seem to be about agreed as to the best call in only about 40 per cent of the answers sent in. It is probable that at least 95 per cent of American players would agree on any of these hands.

They seem to have a particular antipathy to what they call private conventions over there, if one may believe what the writers on the game have to say. They class as private conventions all such things as the modern double, the bid of more than one in a suit, and so forth.

Dalton, in his latest book, ignores the conventional double entirely, not even mentioning that there is such a thing, but in his newspaper articles he condemns it openly. He says: "Attempts have been made from time to time to introduce this bid into England, but it has met with scant favor, for the simple reason that it is absolutely opposed to our English ideas of straight play. Our principle always has been—and I trust always will be—that any prearranged method of giving information to a partner is against the best interests of the game."

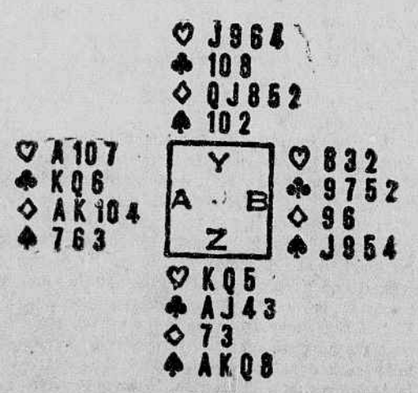
Then he goes on to say that "the argument used in defense of these conventional doubles is that they are quite fair, provided every one at the table knows about them. The same argument would excuse pointing to your scarf-pin for diamond or your waistcoat for hearts."

One would think, from this tirade, that no convention ever was used in England that required any previous explanation or that had been "arranged" for the benefit of the players. This is tantamount to saying that a player who never had read a book on bridge and knew nothing of the game should still be able to draw the correct inference from any bid or play made.

It is rather curious that Dalton himself recommends one of our conventional doubles and boasts about having won a game through its use. This is the double of an opponent's suit call to show two stoppers in that suit in case the doubler's partner feels able, with this information, to go on with his no-trumper. Dalton says, page 95, "Royal Auction Bridge," 1923 edition:

"I saw a very good instance of this quite recently. Z, as dealer, one no trump; A, second hand, two hearts. Y's hand was four hearts to the queen, jack, king, and one club, three small in diamonds and spades. He doubled two hearts. This information was exactly what his partner wanted. He went two no-trumps and won the game, which he could not have done without the information given by the double."

All the English players have adopted our down-and-out echo, the plain suit echo at no trumps, the encouraging card and the reverse discard. Dalton has these in his book. Why do not the same objections lie against all these that he urges against the conventional double of a suit or a no-trumper?



The simple fact is, judging from the evidence before us, that in spite of his reputation as a writer on bridge Dalton and his followers do not understand the double as we use it, so that when they try it they make a mess of it and then condemn it.

In "The London Evening Standard" of May 24 last Dalton gives this example, prefacing it with the remark: "These conventional doubles may come off occasionally, but far more often they fail. My experience is that they fail five or six times for once that they succeed. I will quote one case in which I took an active part." Here is the hand:

Dalton dealt and bid no trump. The player on his left doubled. Y passed and B took out the double with two spades, which Z doubled. A then went two no-trumps, which Z doubled, and then A went to three diamonds, which Y doubled and set for 500. Of course A is described as "a typical American." We should describe him as a typical duffer, of the class that would bid a spade on five to ten without a trick in his hand.

It is bunk like this that goes down with the Britishers. As any ordinary bridge player knows, in America at least, no player who understands the conventional double will double a no-trumper unless well able to support a take-out in either of the major suits, even if the partner has only four to the nine. With A's cards, containing four square tricks, any player of average intelligence would know that if his partner can win one trick anywhere the game is saved. These Britishers ought to come over here and take some lessons.

The solution of Problem No. 125, in which there were no trumps, Z to lead and Y-Z to win four tricks, follows:

Z leads the five of hearts. P discards a club. B wins the heart and leads two rounds of spades. Z gives up the king and Y wins with the queen. A discards the heart. Y leads diamond nine and Z sheds a club. A club is covered by B and won by Z, who leads the heart, jack if A has discarded the queen (his best defense). A makes a club at the end. If A has discarded a club, instead of heart queen, Y leads club queen, instead of the diamond. When A wins the heart he loses two diamond tricks to Y.

Queries and Answers

AUCTION BRIDGE

Question—Down here in Georgia some persons insist that it is the larger number of points that ranks the bidding, so that two no trumps will overcall three clubs, 20 being better than 18. On the other hand, one of our leading lights says it will take four in anything to overcall three in anything.—M. R. S.

Answer—The old style of counting was to consider the point value of the bids, but that was abolished some years ago in the United States, although it is still the law in England. There were so many errors made through not stopping to consider the point value that now it takes more tricks in a lower suit or the same number of tricks in a better suit to overcall. Two diamonds will beat two clubs, but it takes three diamonds to overcall two hearts.

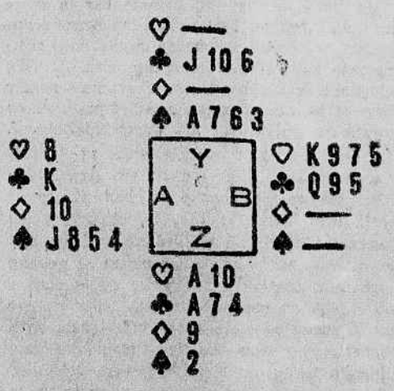
Question—Is it still considered conventional to bid a club or a diamond as a signal to the partner to go no-trump? We know that Milton Work denounces this bid, but some of our best players say it is a big thing.—W. W. F.

Answer—The bid was invented by players who had not the nerve to bid no trump themselves, with the natural result that when they had not enough for no trumps, but had a club bid, their partners went no trumps on nothing, because they were "told to do so." There is no such bid as an "invitation" to partner to go no trumps. If he thinks your suit justifies him in going to no trumps he will do so. He will so go to hearts or spades on the same grounds.

Question—Z deals and bids no trump. A says two spades and Y doubles, holding four spades to the queen, five hearts to jack ten, three diamonds to jack ten and one small club. The dealer insists the double is unjustifiable. Y says it shows he has the clubs stopped.—A. J. R.

Answer—The suit should be stopped twice, and there should be at least one sure outside trick to justify the double. Y should pass, and then if the dealer wants him to bid he will double the two spades and Y can call the hearts.

BRIDGE PROBLEM NO. 126



There are no trumps and Z leads. Y and Z want five tricks. How do they get them? Solution next week.

RUSSIAN BANK

Question—Can a player take a card from his own hand or stock, or from the tableau, and place it in his opponent's stock, or only upon his opponent's discard pile?—R. R. R.

Answer—On either.

Question—A turns spade 6 and places it on the foundation. There is a spade 7 face up in the tableau, but the player turns another card from his hand and B calls a stop on him. B now returns the spade 6 to A's stock and places the spade 7 on it. He insists that otherwise A suffers no penalty.—J. R. K.

Answer—Cards once placed on the foundation cannot be removed under any circumstances. When B calls the stop he must play the spade 7 on the foundation. The penalty against A is that he loses his right to continue the play, which may mean the loss of the game.

Question—Playing stud poker A bets that straight flushes are of no value. B says the game is the same as straight poker. Who is right?—H. L.

Answer—Both are right. A is correct in saying straight flushes have no value in stud and B is right in saying stud is the same as straight poker, because straight flushes have no value in that game, but only in draw poker and its variations.

Question—If a card is faced in dealing, is the deal void, or what is done with the card? In bridge the deal is void.—J. B.

Answer—If only one card is faced before the draw the player must keep it. After the draw it is replaced after all others have been helped.

DRAW POKER

Question—What is to prevent a player drawing to a king and queen, as if he had openers, on the chance of matching one?—E. B.

Answer—Nothing but his conscience and the fear of being caught.